

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 1, 1999**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, September 1, 1999, at 11 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Steven Baker of the Arizona Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss assessor training issues.*

PROPOSED INVOLVEMENT OF TRIBAL LABORATORIES IN NELAC

The committee briefly discussed an options paper regarding this issue that had been distributed electronically prior to the meeting. Discussion centered around the question of whether individual tribal laboratories would each have a vote in NELAC or the tribe would have one vote in NELAC. Participants indicated that they need clarification of the term "equal representation."

TRAINING ISSUES

Dr. Margot Hunt of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), again joined the committee as an invited guest to discuss development of the basic training course. She informed the committee that the contract for days 1 and 2 has been fulfilled. The completion of day 3, which covers assessor checklists, awaits the completion of the checklists. Dr. Hunt indicated that the course will be reordered so that basic assessment techniques will be covered on day 1. Hardcopy training materials (powerpoint slides, speaker's notes, etc.) have been sent to Mr. Baker, but Dr. Hunt does not have access to the contractor's electronic file for general distribution to the committee. It was noted that Mr. Charles Dyer would be meeting with the contractor on September 2, 1999.

There was limited committee discussion of approval of assessor training courses. It was noted that the group approving the training course will also have to oversee its delivery. It was also noted that since training materials are being developed by the contractor, trainers have zero flexibility. Members of the committee tended to support a uniform course developed with a level of detail such that approval would consist of approving the trainers offering the course rather than the course content. Instead of being accredited, assessors will receive a certificate indicating that they have successfully completed the training course. The accrediting authorities are responsible for ensuring that their assessors are qualified. It was suggested, therefore, that the responsibility for the final exam be handed over to the accrediting authorities. This suggestion did not meet with approval from the committee.

Vigorous discussion of the use of data packets ensued. It was generally agreed that a good audit must have a data review. Data packets have been included in the conceptualized technical training courses, but technical training courses may not be on-line for up to four years. After four years, assessors must successfully complete the basic and technical training courses, but until that time, assessors will be "grandfathered" in without technical training. It was noted that committee

members must decide whether they are willing to wait four years to address data review. If they are unwilling to wait that long, then they must include data packets in the basic training course now. Mr. Baker pointed out that the states have already voted for "grandfathering." He also noted that the reason data packets were originally included in the technical training courses rather than the basic training course is that data packets differ so significantly from methodology to methodology. Mr. Friedman responded that he has at his disposal an example of the use of generic data packets in a basic training course. He will e-mail them to committee members for their review.

A participant asked whether any thought had been given to setting up a pilot training course to evaluate it. Mr. Baker confirmed that a September 10, 1999, NELAC Transition Committee teleconference would address that issue. Since Mr. Baker will be unable to attend the teleconference, he asked for a volunteer to sit in for him. Ms. Athene Steinke agreed to sit in on the teleconference if Mr. Baker is not successful in rescheduling it.

The committee set the following schedule for themselves regarding training courses:

- Mr. Friedman will e-mail the document containing examples of the use of data packets in basic training courses to committee members on September 1, 1999.
- Mr. Dyer will meet with the contractor responsible for developing the basic training course on September 2, 1999.
- Mr. Dyer's NELAC Quality Systems (QS) assessor checklist will be discussed in the NELAC Accrediting Authority Committee's teleconference on September 14, 1999. Mr. Dyer will complete the checklist by September 22, 1999. The QS checklist is the central checklist to be covered in day 3 of the basic assessor training course.
- The committee will review the basic assessor training course detail-by-detail in their September 22 teleconference. During the review of the course materials, committee members will formulate potential exam questions.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Mr. R. Wayne Davis indicated that he had not yet responded to Mr. Anthony Bright, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, regarding his letter to the committee. Mr. Davis will draft a response and distribute it to committee members by September 3, 1999.

Mr. Baker informed committee members of a deadline of November 5, 1999, for submitting proposed changes to the NELAC Standard to be posted on the NELAC Website before the Fifth NELAC Interim Meeting. He asked whether there were any changes to be considered. It was generally agreed that the committee needs to address comments made at the Fifth NELAC Annual Meeting by Mr. Jerry Parr and Mr. Friedman. In the ensuing discussion of the upcoming interim meeting, it was agreed that the committee would meet for lunch before their scheduled meeting session.

The status of assessor checklists other than the QS checklist was briefly discussed. Mr. William Ingersoll indicated that he has been developing the radiochemistry (RadChem) checklist and will distribute it to committee members for their review. The committee set October 6, 1999, as the deadline to have checklists updated.

CONCLUSION

The committee tentatively scheduled their next two teleconferences for October 6 and October 20, 1999. Mr. Baker will contact Ms. Carolyn Cross-Talbert to schedule these teleconferences. The allotted teleconference time coming to an end, the committee meeting was adjourned shortly before 1 p.m. EDT.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
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Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Mr. Dyer will meet with the contractor responsible for developing basic assessor training course.	9/2/99
2.	Mr. Friedman will distribute an example of the use of generic data packets in basic assessor training courses to committee members.	Complete
3.	Mr. Davis will draft a response to Mr. Anthony Bright, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality.	9/3/99
4.	Mr. Ingersoll will distribute RadChem assessor checklist to committee members for their review.	10/6/99
5.	Committee members will update assessor checklists.	10/6/99
6.	Mr. Baker will schedule teleconferences for 10/6/99 and 10/20/99.	ASAP

PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 1, 1999

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